DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 114 956 EA 007 697

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TITLE How We Avoided Laundry List Assessment.
PUB DATE Jun 75
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration (Bozeman, Montana, August 17-22, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Administrator Education; *Case Studies (Education); *Course Objectives; Educational Administration; *Educational Assessment; Educational Objectives; *Evaluation Methods; Evaluation Needs; *Higher Education; Self Evaluation

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the assessment procedures that were employed by students and instructors in an advanced graduate course for educational administrators. Because the course objectives were a combination of cognitive objectives, performance objectives, and affective objectives, different forms of assessment were chosen for each specific type of objective. Enabling or discrete objectives were assessed informally first through checks with peer perceptions and faculty perceptions. Experiences that were to serve as prerequisites for the achievement of later objectives were assessed through a record of participation. Terminal, complex cognitive objectives were assessed through written exercises. Objectives that resulted in written reports of research efforts were assessed by the outside agencies for which they were done. Final assessment of the growth of the total group and of individual students was accomplished through public statements of self-evaluation checked by peer perception. (Author/JG)

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HOW WE AVOIDED

LAUNDRY LIST ASSESSMENT

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June 1975

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Paper Presented at the National Conference of Professors of Educational Administration, Bozeman, Montana, August 18, 1975.

EA 007 697

We in New York State are faced with the State Education Department mandated re-registration of all preparation programs for educational administrators in January of 1976. The re-registration process has two important dimensions; the restatement of program in specific competence-based format and the formation of a tripartite consortium to restate the program and to monitor the certification process.

The restatement dimension is rather straightforward. Each program must contain at least the following elements:

a. The program must be stated in terms of instructional objectives.
b. The rationale and procedures for program evaluation and renewal must be explicit.
c. The procedures and processes for assessing students must be specified.
d. The procedures for counseling students must be stated.

The second dimension is more complex. A tripartite consortium made up of members from the university, the school districts, and the teacher association or union will develop the re-registration documents and monitor the implementation of the revised programs. The problems that arise out of the consortium activities are significant and worthy of careful examination, however that examination is beyond the scope of this paper.

Currently, we at the State University of New York at Albany are attempting to state the objectives of our program and are experimenting with various procedures and techniques for assessing students and for operating and evaluating a competence-based program.

We are faced with two major assessment dilemmas, that of deciding what to assess and then how to assess without resorting to the omnipresent laundry list format. In this light then, it is the purpose of this paper to describe a procedure for assessment of the objectives in an advanced graduate course for educational administrators. The course is called Community Analysis and is part of a core sequence for certificate and doctoral students. The course is taken during the residence year. The students have varied backgrounds in terms of content and depth of preparation, and in terms of occupational aspirations.

All features of a competence-based program, particularly the assessments, derive from the careful statements of the objectives. The objectives of the Community Analysis course are rather complex. The course is not purely cognitive, nor is it purely performance, nor purely affective. Our first task was the establishment of course objectives. These had to be revised as we, the students and professors, came to know more about each other and as the course was more fully analyzed. Some of the objectives lent themselves to traditional forms of assessment. In some cases, however, it was necessary to first explore with the class, what needed to be assessed and then devise appropriate means of assessment.

Cognition lent itself to traditional means of assessment. The course has a number of lower order cognitive objectives which are easily assessed. For example, consider the first

objective as it was assessed in the take-home final examination, distributed on the first day of class which was our means of making the objectives and assessment of the course explicit and public:

> 1) In the literature of the social sciences, the community is defined in many ways. Identify (author and title) and state five (5) definitions of community. (500 words).

There were also some higher order cognitive objectives which required the application of facts to a specific situation. Again from the take-home examination:

> 4) Discuss with reference to the literature, your role as an investigator in a field study. (500 words).

Implicit in both of these objectives was that they were to be completed to the satisfaction of the instructors, subject to negotiation with the student.

There were objectives which related to skills training which were, initially, on a formative level assessed not in terms of knowledge or performance but rather in terms of experience. The skills were taught in a laboratory situation and the assessment was simply a record of participation in the experience. A summative assessment of the skills was deferred until later in the course when the students were doing the field work. The objective as it appeared in print looked like this for one set of skills:

> Upon completion of this training unit you will be able to:
> - identify and use five (5) basic communication skills
> - determine the appropriate use of any of these skills in specific situations.*

* Adapted from the Instruction Supervision Training Program developed by Boyan et al, U.C. Santa Barbara, 1973

But the assessment was through attendance at this training session and self-assessment. This obviously was formative in nature.

Once the cognitive materials had been mastered, at least on the lower levels, and the skills had been introduced, at least on an experiential level, the group was ready for a major performance objective. The objective was defined, made public and negotiated with the class. In retrospect it can be stated that the objective was that:

> The Community Analysis class will conduct a comparative study of decision making in two institutions using as an entré the performance of organizational development studies which meet the needs of the respective organizations. These studies will reflect the learnings of the first part of the course.

The assessment of this complex objective was accomplished in a series of activities related to the various phases of the field study. As the work at the separate institutions went through the phases of initial contact, client problem definition, negotiations for resources available to accomplish problem solution, specifications of objectives of the organizational development consultancy, data gathering, final report development, and presentation of the report. There were constant discussions among students and between students and the professors over the way particular jobs were to be and were in fact done. Sometimes these discussions focused upon the performance of individuals and sometimes upon the progress

of the class as a whole or on a team within the class.

Additional opportunities for assessment developed after the reports of the organizational development studies have been written. The assessment took the form of study team discussion of whose name would appear on the final report, the criteria for inclusion being based upon contributions made.

At this point the two client organizations received and reviewed the final reports of the organizational development studies. They provided the class with feedback regarding their satisfaction with the reports.

Once the two organizational studies were completed and the results reported to the clients, the class then had to prepare the comparative analysis of decision making in the two client organizations. To accomplish this a new round of discussions/negotiations took place. As these discussions and the work activities resulting from the discussions went on, there were continual feedback sessions among individuals, between students, between students and professors and between the class as a whole and professors as to the progress of the report and the contributions made by individuals.

On two occasions during this period a two hour period was spent by the class reviewing the professors' role in leading the class. On the second occasion a form was employed to make a record of individual perceptions which might have been lost in the general discussion. As we have used the terms evaluation and assessment, this was an evaluation of the progress of the course and not an assessment of students.

Finally, after the class had as a whole produced three documents, the two studies of organizational development problems and the comparative study of decision making, which were satisfactory to the class and to the professors, a final feedback session occurred.

Prior to the final feedback session each student was asked to prepare a short statement outlining their contribution to the studies. It was to be organized around three areas. First, the individual's contribution in terms of scholarship. Second, the individual's success in meeting obligations to the group, attending meetings, performing chores assigned by the group, volunteering for chores and so forth. And, thirdly, the individual's mode of operation within the group. These three categories were supplemented by guidelines as appended to this paper. The self evaluations were to include statements of what the individuals actually did in behavioral terms followed by the individual's judgement of the value of that contribution.

On the day of the final evaluation the class was divided into two groups. The professors functioned as facilitators

confining their activities to time keeping and monitoring the discussions to keep the topic in focus. The first activity was to have each person's self assessment statement passed to the one person left. The person who now held the self evaluation had three minutes to read it and append a written, signed comment either in support or in modification of the self assessment or on topics not covered by the self assessment. The only restriction was that the comment had to refer to specific behavior in order to support any positive or negative judgement. At the end of three minutes the papers were again passed to the left and so forth until all had seen and commented upon each self assessment. When the papers had returned home the group had five minutes to read and prepare a summary, to be delivered orally. It was suggested that the summary should include a brief statement of what the individual did, a selection of positive comment and finally a statement from the individual as to what the individual feels should be improved in terms of self growth. Following the individual's summary of his or her own assessment and the reaction to it, there was time for a few minutes of further discussion by the group for clarification.

When everyone had had their say or when the allotted five minutes had expired, the person immediately to the right of the person whose assessment was being discussed was charged with paraphrasing what had taken place during the oral portion of the assessment. As stated above, the instructors confined their participation to time keeping and keeping the discussion on the subject and in behavior terms.

The results of these self assessments as tested against the group were most interesting. In some cases contributions which individuals made which had not come to the attention of the professors were revealed. In some cases the group brought out the lack of contribution although the individual in question had left a favorable impression with the instructors. Generally, however, it was clear that the perceptions of the students and the professors were very close. The final assessment would not have been substantially different if it had been made by either one of the instructors, or by the class. In one case a person's self assessment was much better than that with which the group or the professors would credit that person. In several cases the individual's self assessment was less than that of the class or the professors. It was abundantly clear that individuals made differing contributions to the class. They did different things. Contributions which were considered equally worthy were very different in nature.

There were some students who organized the group, that is who recruited people to accomplish tasks. There were those who made external contracts for the class. There were those who planned the work of the group. There were those who wrote. There were those who researched and there were those, the majority, who did combinations of these and other tasks but usually with an emphasis in one area.

These forms of assessment, paper and pencil tests of lower and higher order cognition, attendance at initial experiences, the production of a product to assess performance and self

assessment as tested against the perceptions of the group gave the professors and the class a great deal of confidence in their procedures. Within the usual differences of opinion as to specifics the paper and pencil tests picked up the degree to which individuals had mastered the theoretical base. Attendance at the laboratory sessions was as precise an assessment of the skills being taught as was possible at the time. This formative assessment was followed by assessment of more summative nature through continuous informal feedback sessions as the skills were applied. The product was assessed basically by external organizations. They had a need and the product had to meet their need. In a sense the organizational development studies done for the outside organizations were also summative assessments of the application of the cognitive objectives of the earlier parts of the program to a real situation. The self assessment as tested against the perceptions of others served to pick up and point out the competences about which there were differences of opinion.

These procedures allowed assessment to focus on areas of importance and significance to the professors and the students. Objectives which were accomplished without difficulty were informally self assessed. Such self assessment was checked both informally and in formal situations by peer and professional perceptions. Time was not spent going through an atomistic laundry list of objectives.

The following chart relates the type of objective to the assessment.

TYPE OF OBJECTIVE	FORM OF ASSESSMENT
Cognitive objectives for students	Paper and pencil tests
Introduction to skills for students	Attendance at an experience
Performance objectives for students	a) outside review of product b) peer discussion (informal) c) peer committee review d) student - professor conferences
Complex of objectives which combined knowledge, skills and attitudes and were correlated to individual student needs.	Self evaluation tested against peer perception
Course instructional objectives	a) professors in student fishbowl b) written evaluation